



# Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Baucus Applauds Start of U.S.-Thailand Free Trade Agreement Business Coalition** *Senator Speaks to Group about Recent Trip to Thailand*

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) Today U.S. Senator Max Baucus shared his support for the launch of the U.S.-Thailand Free Trade Agreement Business Coalition. Baucus recently returned to the United States after a week-long trade mission in Asia where he met with government officials and businesses in Japan, China, and Thailand to discuss ways to expand trade opportunities for the U.S.

While in Thailand, Baucus met with a number of the country's leaders, including Thailand's Prime Minister Thaksin, Foreign Minister Surakiart, and Commerce Minister Watana. Baucus expressed his support for the U.S.-Thailand FTA negotiations, while highlighting the need for Thailand to address the protection of intellectual property.

Baucus's comments at the U.S.-Thailand FTA Business Coalition's event follow:

"I'm delighted to be here today at the launch of the U.S.-Thailand FTA Business Coalition. I was just in Thailand last Friday. I met with Prime Minister Thaksin at his office in Bangkok. He's an impressive and engaging person. We had a great conversation and talked about many things, including our philosophies on leadership and politics.

I was particularly interested to learn about the Prime Minister's rural development program. Thailand is dealing with many of the same problems that we face here in our own country. Of course, we also talked about the FTA negotiations. I pushed hard to get the Administration to negotiate with Thailand.

I have long argued that we should focus our trade policy more on Asia, and that we should negotiate FTAs with countries that offer sizeable markets for U.S. farmers and companies. Thailand fits the bill nicely. Thailand is the eighteenth largest trading partner of the United States. And Thailand's 63 million people make an FTA with Thailand commercially meaningful to U.S. companies, in particular for U.S. agricultural producers.

I know I'm preaching to the choir - we are, after all, celebrating the launch of the business coalition that supports the FTA. There are some tough issues to be sure, on both sides. But I hope and expect that we'll be able to address those issues during the course of the

negotiations, and that - in the not-too-distant future - we will gather again to celebrate the successful conclusion of negotiations.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Congress, my Thai friends, and now the U.S.-Thailand FTA Business Coalition on the FTA negotiations.”

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